

Rituals

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Rituals

by [lionfish13](#)

Summary

When tragedy occurs, Miyagi must learn to deal not only with his own grief, but at the same time the consequences of having a relationship with an underage boy. WARNING: This fic contains Character Death, some homophobic and strong language and sad/depressing themes.

Notes

Please note: this is entirely a work of fiction and not intended to upset or offend anybody. If it does, I'm extremely sorry.

Miyagi drained his glass of water, thirsty after all the effort he'd made that morning pleasuring Shinobu. He smiled as he remembered how loud Shinobu had been as he urged his older lover on.

He'd left the boy in his bed, stretching and smiling contentedly and looking more than a little dozy. Miyagi popped some bread in the toaster and starting setting the table for their breakfast.

"Hey, lazy bones, are you getting up any time today?" he called.

When there was no answer, he rolled his eyes and plodded back to the bedroom. Throwing open the door, he burst in, moaning,

"You better get your bum out of bed, Shu-chin, you have to go to your - " His voice cut off and he halted suddenly as he caught sight of his lover in the bed.

Shinobu was where he had left him, sprawled across his side of the bed, but his eyes were wide open and staring, unmoving, at the ceiling, his body lying limply on the sheets.

A lump caught in Miyagi's throat and his heart suddenly started hammering against his chest.

"Sh-Shinobu?" he whispered, suddenly terrified.

The boy made no response.

Miyagi started gasping in heavy gulps of air. Forcing his frozen limbs to move, he leapt forward, scooping Shinobu up into his arms and turning his head towards his own.

Glassy, lifeless eyes stared up at him.

He shook Shinobu, moaning and crying out his name over and over again. He called for his lover, his querulous voice the only sound in the room, never receiving any reply. Clutching the boy to him with trembling hands, he buried his face in Shinobu's fair hair, watching it darken as his tears soaked into the fine strands.

He wasn't fully aware of what happened next. He knew he must somehow have managed to call both an ambulance and Shinobu's father, since his apartment was soon flooded with people, though he had no recollection of doing so.

The full Takatsuki family was gathered around his dining table. Shinobu's mother and sister were wrapped in each other's arms while his father sat as still as a statue, completely stunned and unable to comprehend what was happening.

There was nothing the paramedics could do, they said as soon as they had arrived. Shinobu was already dead.

They wrapped the naked boy up in a bag and took him away, a thin, plastic lump paraded past his family's grief-stricken eyes.

Not much later, Miyagi felt a hand on his shoulder and turned to find himself face to face with a stern, middle-aged, frowning face. Detective Umehara of the Tokyo Police Force had been alerted to the case of a teenage boy found dead while naked in an older man's bed. It was only then that Miyagi realised he was still only wearing his boxers.

The newspapers had a field day. 'UNDERAGE BOY FOUND DEAD, NAKED IN MALE PROFESSOR'S BED' ran the headlines, and rumours ran wild that Takatsuki Shinobu had been killed by his father's employee during a bout of S&M sex that had got out of control. Speculation had it that he had been found strangled, fingerprint bruises from Miyagi's large hands all the way around his neck.

Of course, the people actually involved, the paramedics, the police, Miyagi himself and the greatly reassured Takatsuki family all knew this wasn't the case; Shinobu, Miyagi reminded himself, had been perfectly well and alive when he left him. The poor boy had tragically suffered from sudden arrhythmic death syndrome, or SADS. The inquest into his death had discovered that he had unknown problems with his heart which had caused his sudden and terrible demise.

Though their vigorous love-making earlier that morning probably hadn't helped, Miyagi brooded, still unable to stop himself from at least partially blaming himself.

The cause of Shinobu's death wasn't the issue, however; still plunged in the depths of his grief, Miyagi was suddenly on trial for a separate issue: the fact that he had been having a sexual

relationship with an underage boy.

He was immediately fired from his job and forbidden to be in a position of authority and responsibility over young people for the rest of his life. But for the crime he had committed, he was also sentenced to five years' imprisonment. He had no defence. As he finished pronouncing his sentence, the judge asked if Miyagi had any final words to say.

The Takatsuki family was sitting in the viewers' area. Overwhelmed by the recent events and revelations, they had followed every aspect of Miyagi's case as they tried to make sense of their son or brother's life and death. Miyagi looked at them, noticing their glistening, tired eyes and the lines that had appeared even on his ex-wife's youthful face.

"Only this: I accept that I committed this crime, and I will face the punishment given to me. But, for the record at any rate – and for his family – please know that I truly loved Shinobu with all my heart," his voice started to break. "And, if it is at all possible, I wish to attend his funeral, even if I have to be accompanied by a guard. I want to say goodbye to the person I loved the most."

A voice cleared, and Miyagi heard Takatsuki's voice ring out. "That's not possible. The funeral has already been held. We did not feel you were welcome."

Miyagi's eyes grew wide at this and he stared in shock at his former boss. Shinobu was already gone, taken completely from him, he'd never be able to say goodbye. His face crumpled and he hurriedly looked away, moving quickly when a guard came to lead him away.

He was soon transferred to the prison that would be his home for the next five years. To his relief, he was given a cell to himself, a security precaution the wardens decided was necessary, which turned out to have been a good thing as upon arrival Miyagi immediately sensed an attitude of disgust and hatred towards him.

"Oi, you! You're that fag that fucked that kid to death, aren't you?" one of the inmates snarled on his second day.

Miyagi's hackles instantly rose and he scowled at the thug, but out of the corner of his eye he noticed several of the other prisoners watching and a few even walking up for a closer look. The expressions on their faces weren't exactly friendly, so he wisely decided to simply ignore the man trying to provoke him and walked away.

"Hey! I was talking to you, you sick fuck!" the man screamed at his back.

He didn't always get away so easily. One day he had just finished his shower and was pulling on his clothes when the antagonistic inmate from earlier cornered him with a couple of others behind him. He left the hospital wing with a black eye, bruises across his back, sides and thighs and two broken ribs.

Yet he made no fuss, in fact he barely spoke at all. He did his best to avoid the other inmates and stuck religiously to the routine organised by the wardens so that to the guards he was a model prisoner. He never rose to the bait when anyone tried to provoke him and was softly spoken and even helpful to others when the need arose. He kept to himself and was constantly surrounded by an aura of sadness.

As the months passed, the verbal and physical attacks by the other inmates grew less and less frequent. They came to realise that here was not a sickening sex offender, a manipulator and molester of the innocent; Miyagi's grief at the loss of his lover was genuine and palpable.

For those who, after at least six months imprisonment, had maintained an excellent record of behaviour, the prison was prepared to offer small rewards as an incentive for the inmates to continue their good behaviour and rehabilitation.

So it came to be that Miyagi was summoned to the head warden of the prison and told that he had earned one day when he would be allowed to leave the prison, naturally accompanied by a guard. If his good behaviour continued, he would be allowed one day out each year of his prison sentence. He could choose the day, where he went and what he did, within reason.

Miyagi sat still for a few moments, reflecting. In the end, he didn't need long to decide what he wanted to do.

On the first anniversary of Shinobu's death, with his right wrist handcuffed to one of the prison guards, Miyagi slowly approached his lover's grave for the first time, a huge bunch of lilies held lightly in his hands.

Crouching down in front of the grave, he placed the flowers down gently, then reached out and traced the characters of Shinobu's name that were engraved on the stone.

The man beside him started to grow restless after a while. They had been standing at this grave in silence for nearly an hour, and he was getting bored and tired. He glanced in irritation at the prisoner chained to him and was startled to see a silent tear trickling down the man's cheek.

At last, Miyagi rose. Even though it was not quite midday and he had been given the whole day to be out in the real world, he requested that they return to the prison.

He sat in sad silence the entire journey back and as he still had the day to himself, upon arrival at the prison he headed straight for his cell and spent the rest of the day curled up in a ball on his bed.

The next year passed uneventfully, and Miyagi was once again informed that he had earned a day of freedom.

Once again, he requested the anniversary of Shinobu's death as his privilege day. Accompanied by the same guard, he traced his steps of the previous year and laid a bunch of flowers at his lover's grave. Kneeling in front of it, he stared at Shinobu's name, recalling in his mind that fateful day when he had left his lover alive and returned to find him beyond all help.

His sad reverie was broken by a sudden shout. Twisting his head in surprise, he started as he caught sight of the angry faces of Shinobu's parents as they stormed up to him.

"What the hell are you doing here?!" Shinobu's father exclaimed. "Why aren't you in that hell pit with all the other dregs of society?"

"Takatsuki-san," Miyagi started in a low voice, "I'm so sorry if seeing me here has caused you any distress. I was granted a day of freedom and I had to come – I had to be here... For Shinobu."

"Well, we don't want you here!" Shinobu's mother interjected shrilly. Visibly upset, she continued, "Please – don't ever come here again! Just stay away from us, and stay away from my son!"

Miyagi was incensed. They had prevented him from attending Shinobu's funeral, and now they were trying to stop him visiting his lover's grave, even though he could only come once a year? Did they still not understand his relationship with their son? Did they still not know how much he had loved Shinobu?

Frowning, he opened his mouth to protest, but before he could say anything, his guard, sensing a

dangerous situation developing, declared that his visit was over and that they had to return to the prison now.

Unable to do anything but obey, Miyagi followed him dutifully, but resolved to himself that he wouldn't let the Takatsuki family or anyone else for that matter prevent him from getting as close to Shinobu as he could again.

The following year, despite Shinobu's parents' warning, he returned again to the grave, finding a little comfort in knowing that Shinobu was only a few feet away from him, albeit in the ground.

This time, however, instead of returning to the prison immediately, he requested that they make another stop.

It turned out that nearly three years away hadn't erased the memory of the roads and streets leading up to that familiar block of flats. Stepping into the elevator, without thinking his fingers pressed the button of his floor and he closed his eyes as his stomach jumped slightly from the gentle whoosh as the elevator rose steadily upwards. The metallic smell filled his nose and as they slowed down, he heard the familiar click as the elevator stopped and the doors slid open.

Walking down the corridor to his apartment, he felt as though he had been here only yesterday. Unlocking the door and stepping inside, he had to stop himself from calling out to Shinobu to let him know he was home. He had forgotten for a moment, as he so often did, that his lover was no longer with him – and remembering all over again each time hurt just as badly as that moment when he had first beheld his beautiful, young lover dead in his bed.

"I'm surprised you've kept this place," a voice behind him remarked, and he jumped, pulled suddenly back into the present.

Looking round, he saw the guard who accompanied him every year on his outing glancing around the apartment with interest.

"Yeah, well... I wanted to keep it. I've got enough saved up to pay the rent while I serve my sentence and my parents have kept an eye on the place for me. Lots of memories here... I couldn't let it go."

"Bad memories, though, weren't they."

"Some are, of course. Not all though."

Hesitantly, Miyagi moved further into the apartment, the man following just behind him, still attached to his wrist.

He had wanted to come back here, though he didn't know exactly why or what he wanted to see. Now, though, his feet moved of their own accord and he found himself trembling slightly as he approached his old bedroom door.

A tentative hand reached out and curled around the door knob. Twisting it gently, he slowly pulled the door open and willed his eyes to look inside.

The room was neat and tidy. The bed was made up - presumably his parents had done that. Books, brushes and combs and various products were arranged neatly on top of the furniture. His eyes flicked over to his bedside table and landed on a framed photograph of Shinobu; his Shinobu-chin, blushing and looking a little embarrassed, though a hint of a smile pricked at the corners of his mouth.

Miyagi's heart suddenly clenched painfully and he staggered backwards, gasping.

"Hey, man, you alright?" the guard asked anxiously.

Miyagi shook his head.

"Leave – need to leave now – please..." he choked out, before turning and practically dragging the guard out of the apartment in his attempt to flee from the pain and the memories.

The ordeal didn't stop him returning the following year, however. The guard was starting to get used to the pattern by now, and took him straight to Shinobu's grave without question in the morning. When Miyagi requested that they visit his old apartment, the man looked at him curiously for a moment, recalling his violent reaction the previous year, but acquiesced.

This time, however, Miyagi determinedly kept his eyes away from the bedroom. The door still stood partially open as he had left it the last time. Instead he found himself attracted to the kitchen and he padded slowly over to the room that Shinobu had claimed for himself.

In his head, he heard the sounds of clattering pans and his own voice as he yelled at Shinobu to stop trying to burn his apartment down.

He stared into the room and a small smile played on his lips as he envisioned Shinobu standing at the counter, chopping up yet another cabbage. His eyes swept up and down the imaginary Shinobu's body and he reached out a hand as though to brush some errant hairs behind his lover's ear.

The guard stared at him in surprise and wonder as Miyagi simply stood there, hand outstretched, eyes closed, smiling. After a few moments, Miyagi opened his eyes and turned his head. He hesitated for just a moment, then walked up to the fridge and opened it. It was completely bare, not even switched on.

"We need to go to the shop," he announced.

"Huh?" replied the guard, confused at this unexpected turn of events.

"There's a Queens Kumaya just down the road, we need to go there. I'm going to rustle up some lunch."

The guard merely shrugged his shoulders and accompanied Miyagi to the store, feeling completely baffled when the man spent a full fifteen minutes choosing a cabbage.

Upon their return to the apartment, Miyagi did indeed start cooking. He prepared miso soup from a packet, boiled some rice and fried the cabbage. At first, the guard thought the man had gone insane, the way that he was hacking up the cabbage. As it cooked, it let off a fairly nice smell, but even when it looked like it was ready, Miyagi didn't take it off the gas.

"Er, I think it's done," he pointed out, nodding at the food.

"No, not quite!" Miyagi replied, sounding almost happy, possibly for the first time since the guard had met him.

In the end, they sat down together at the dining table, several dishes laid out in front of them. The guard simply sat and looked at the disgusting, black, putrid-smelling gunk in front of him, then stared in disbelief at the prisoner who was wolfing down the burnt cabbage as if it were ambrosia.

“Mmm,” Miyagi purred as he devoured the final piece of cabbage. “Delicious!”

He’s gone completely bonkers, the guard decided.

“Are you going to eat that?” Miyagi asked him, pointing at the cabbage on the guard’s plate.

“Er, no, you can have it,” the man replied, gobsmacked when Miyagi eagerly grabbed his plate and ate his portion of cabbage too.

The man’s bewilderment wasn’t lost on Miyagi. He grinned suddenly.

“I know what you’re thinking – I used to hate this too. But Shinobu always cooked cabbage like this, he was hopeless in the kitchen really. Always used to do the same thing too, I was subjected to this gross mush every single day for ages. But I guess now... Now it tastes good because it’s a reminder of him.”

“You really did love him then?” his companion asked, suddenly curious about this man and his queer rituals.

The smile faded from Miyagi’s face. “Yes. I still do. Though it only seems to disgust everyone.”

The guard was silent for a moment. Then, in a quiet voice he replied,

“Not everyone.”

The following year Miyagi and the guard spent the day in almost total silence. Both knew the routine by now. They dropped by Shinobu’s grave in the morning, Miyagi once again leaving a large bunch of lilies in front of the gravestone. He knelt in solemn silence for some time, remembering the boy he loved. The guard stood a little further back than usual. They were still handcuffed together, but these cuffs were joined by a lengthier rope. The wardens had deemed it acceptable since Miyagi had always proven to be a trustworthy prisoner and anyway had only a few more months of his sentence left to serve.

Having performed this ritual for several years, the guard now felt that he not only understood Miyagi fairly well, but that he also somewhat knew the young, deceased boy. He stood still, his eyes also fixed on the gravestone, a sombre expression on his face. When Miyagi rose to leave, the guard gave a deep bow to the gravestone before turning to Miyagi and walking with him to the prison car.

They returned as usual to Miyagi’s apartment, stopping along the way to pick up a cabbage and other ingredients for the reproduction of Shinobu’s signature dish. As they ate, the guard asked,

“So, you’re out in a couple of months, eh, Miyagi? What are you going to do then?”

“Come back here,” Miyagi answered instantly.

“Won’t that be too painful for you?” the guard replied worriedly.

“It will hurt. But I have to. I want to keep Shinobu close to me. Here, in this apartment – I can see him. I can hear him, I close my eyes and reach out and I can touch him! Nowhere else will do,” Miyagi replied determinedly.

One year later, and Miyagi set out for Shinobu’s grave a free man. No-one accompanied him and the route he took passed nowhere near the prison. As he walked up the path to the grave, however, the usual lilies cradled in his arms, he noticed the figure of a man up ahead, also holding flowers.

As he came closer, he started.

“Hello, Miyagi,” his old prison guard said softly. “I hope you don’t mind me being here, but I felt that I had to come today.”

Miyagi paused, then smiled gently. “No, I don’t mind. Thank you for coming.”

Together, they laid the flowers at Shinobu’s grave. Then, as Miyagi knelt down, the old guard stood back and in silence paid his own respects to the boy.

Miyagi reached out and traced Shinobu’s name on the stone with his fingers. In a very quiet voice he spoke to his lover, saying,

“Shinobu-chin, as I have for the last five years as a prisoner, so will I now as a free man continue to love you. I promise I will hold you close to me in my heart for the rest of my life, until the day comes when, finally, I can meet you again.

My love.”

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